

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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TAGS: OREP (CODEL HOLLINGS/GRIFFIN) PFOR

SUBJ: CODEL HOLLINGS/GRIFFIN PRESS COMMENT ON INDIAN
OCEAN

REF: CANBERRA 149

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE
MELBOURNE AGE ON JANUARY 9, 1976. QTE.

AUSTRALIA BACKS FORD ON ISLAND BASE PLAN

2. AUSTRALIA WANTS THE DIEGO GARCIA ISLAND BASE GUILT UP,
TO MAINTAIN A NAVAL BALANCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

3.QTE THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. PEACOCK,
ANNOUNCED THIS IN A STATEMENT YESTERDAY.

4. QTE AT THE SAME TIME, HE REBUFFED A REQUEST FROM A
VISITING U.S. SENATOR THAT AUSTRALIA PLAY A ROLE IN LIMIT-
ING A SUPER-POWER BUILD-UP IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

5. QTE MR. PEACOCK'S STATEMENT SUPPORTED THE LINE TAKEN
BY THE FORD ADMINISTRATION IN ITS BATTLE WITH A HOSTILE
CONGRESS OVER THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA.

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6. QTE SENATOR JOHN CULVER - A DEMOCRAT AND ONE OF FOUR U.S. CONGRESSMEN NOW VISITING AUSTRALIA - HAD ASKED MR. PEACOCK AND THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. FRASER, TO PLAY A INNER QTE GO-BETWEEN END INNER QTE ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT TALKS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION ON ASZAVAL DE-ESCALATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

7. QTE SENATOR CULVER LED MOVES IN CONGRESS TO STOP THE CONSTRUCTION OF DIEGO GARCIA AND FORCE THE FORD ADMINISTRATION INTO TALKS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

8. QTE THE ADMINISTRATION HAS UNTIL APRIL TO ESTABLISH TALKS WITH MOSCOW.

9. QTE SENATOR CULVER ALSO ASKED AUSTRALIA TO EXPLAIN TO NATIONS BORDERING THE INDIAN OCEAN THE CONCERN OF AMERICA TO AVOID A BUILD-UP IN THE OCEAN.

10. QTE BUT MR. PACOCK RULED THIS OUT YESTERDAY. RLQM QTE HE SAID: INNER QTE IT IS, OF COURSE, IN AUSTRALIA'S INTERESTS THAT THIS BALANCE OF POWER WILL BE KEPT AT THE LOWEST PRACTICAL LEVEL.

12. INNER QTE WE WOULD THEREFORE WELCOME TH NEGOTIATIONS OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE USSR ON MUTUAL RESTRAIN ON NAVAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IF THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED. END INNER QTE.

13. QTE BUT MR. PEACOCK DISCOUNTED THE POSSIBILITY OF AUSTRALIA BEING INVOLVED IN ANY SUCH MOVE.

14. QTE INNER QTE IN ADVANCE OF ANY SUCH NEGOTIATIONS HOWEVER, I DO NOT THINK IT APPROPRIATE TO FORESHADOW THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY DIPLOMATIC ACTIONBY AUSTRALIA, END INNER QTE HE SAID.

15. QTE THE FOUR VISITING SENATORS YESTERDAY MET THE OPPOSITION LEADER, MR. WHITLAM, FOR EXTENSIVE TALKS.

16. QTE MR. WHITLAM OPPOSES ANY SUPER-POWER BUILD-UP
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AND IS TOTALLY AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE.

17. QTE MR. WHITLAM IS BELIEVED TO HAVE PUT THE VIEW THAT CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS IN AUSTRALIA HAD IN THE PAST DELIBERATELY TRIED TO COMMIT AMERICAN FORCES TO SOUTH-EAST ASIA. END QTE END UNCLASSIFIED

18. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE REMARKS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE WERE ATTRIBUTED TO FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK, THEY WERE ACTUALLY QUOTES FROM A BACKGROUND PAPER APPROVED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT FOLLOWING A PRESS REPORT (SEE REFTTEL) THAT SENATOR JOHN CULVER HAD ASKED AUSTRALIA TO SERVE AS A QTE GO-BETWEEN END QTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION TO TRY TO CURB A SUPER POWER BUILD-UP IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. (SENATOR CULVER DID NOT RPT NOT MAKE SUCH A REQUEST IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE. IN FACT, HE SPECIFICALLY DISAVOWED A SUGGESTION THAT THE U.S. WOULD LIKE TO USE THE GOA AS A QTE GO-BETWEEN. END QTE)

18. IN THE BACKGROUND PAPER, THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT ANY NEGOTIATIONS INVOLVING THE U.S. AND THE GOA WOULD BE DONE GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT WITHOUT REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS. END COMMENT. END CONFIDENTIAL.
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